

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2380

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1569

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJECT: CHOU EN-LAI'S HEALTH

REF: PEKING 1399

1. INFORMATION FROM POLISH AND JAPANESE SOURCES HERE NOW SUGGESTS THAT LANGUAGE USED BY TENG HSIAO-P'ING IN DESCRIBING CHOU EN-LAI'S HEALTH TO CODEL FULBRIGHT WAS CAREFULLY NUANCED LINE WHICH HAS BEEN USED ON AT LEAST THREE OTHER OCCASIONS. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL TENG TOLD CODEL FULBRIGHT THAT CHOU'S CONDITION WAS "GRAVER" THAN WHEN SENATOR JACKSON VISITED PEKING IN EARLY JULY, AND PREMIER THEREFORE UNABLE TO RECEIVE FOREIGN VISITORS. WE TREATED TENG'S REFERENCE TO CHOU'S HEALTH WITH SOME RESERVE AT THE TIME BECAUSE IT WAS MADE IN THE CONTEXT OF EXPRESSING REGRETS THAT THE PREMIER WOULD NOT MEET THE GROUP. WE SUSPECTED THEN THAT TENG WAS SENSITIVE TO THE POSSIBILITY THE GROUP WOULD FEEL SLIGHTED AT NOT RECEIVING THE SAME TREATMENT ACCORDED SENATOR JACKSON.

2. JAPANESE HAVE INFORMED US THAT TENG HAS USED ALMOST IDENTICAL LANGUAGE RECENTLY WITH TWO OF THEIR DELEGATIONS, THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP WHICH JUST DEPARTED CHINA AND THE
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YOMIRUI SHIMBUN DELEGATION WHICH SAW HIM ON AUGUST 20,

OW WELL BEFORE THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION. ON BOTH OCCASIONS TENG SAID CHOU'S CONDITION WAS "GRAVER" (GENG YANZHONG) THAN IT HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY. YOMIURI DELEGATION DID NOT REPORT TENG'S REMARKS BECAUSE THEY CONSIDERED THEM SENSITIVE. POLES INFORM US THAT MFA OFFICIALS HAVE USED IDENTICAL LANGUAGE WITH THEM.

3. COMMENT: IT APPEARS THAT CHOU EN-LAI'S HEALTH DID DETERIORATE DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST FOLLOWING HIS APPEARANCE AT ARMY DAY, AND CHINESE ARE QUIETLY PASSING THE WORD ON A PRIVATE BASIS. THAT THEY REMAIN SENSITIVE TO PUBLIC STATEMENTS, HOWEVER, IS INDICATED BY RECENT STORIES ATTRIBUTED TO TENG TO THE EFFECT THAT CHOU IS RECUPERATING.
BRUCE

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